

Site: St. Louis Airport  
ID #: MOD 98576765  
Area: 101  
Date: 5-20-88

MAY 20 1988

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: SLAPS Radioactive Drum Discovery

FROM: Mike Kosakowski

TO: File

On May 19, 1988, Ron McCutchen and I visited the site of the reported discovery of 240 drums of radioactive waste at the St. Louis Airport. We first met with Thomas Fussell, VP of Midcoast and his consultant Tom Covilli of Allstates Environmental Services. Gary Holmes of the airport and representatives of the city and state health departments and the Missouri DNR were present.

The drums and other debris were discovered because early soil borings came across foreign fill material and Midcoast decided to dig this out to replace it with better fill before constructing its hangar. 240 drums were found. They were found in a banged-up condition and several had a pattern of holes in their bottoms which suggested that their last use was for holding tools or other items. Labels on the drums indicated that they originally contained asphaltic materials (curing agents, sealers, etc.). Midcoast immediately brought in Allstates to deal with the problem. The drums were removed from the ground and a pool of liquid that accumulated at the bottom of the pit was sampled and pumped into 81 new steel drums. The samples were analyzed for RCRA components and it was found that they had a volatile hazardous waste characteristic. One of the cleanup contractors hired asked that the liquid and surrounding soils be tested for radioactivity before they would begin. No radiation was found by meter at the site, however, chemical tests found low levels of radioactivity only in the liquid samples. Midcoast was notified late afternoon on May 13 of the radiological test results.

Between the date of the original discovery (May 6) and the radioactive results of May 13, the construction company continued to work on preparing the site for the hangar foundation.

My assessment of the situation is:

(1) Midcoast handled the situation in an appropriate manner. There is no immediate health threat to the public.

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Superfund

(2) The radiological tests of the liquid may not represent the contents of the drums. The drums were found in a buried drainage ditch and ground water appeared to be present at the depth involved. It is also possible that the ground water was contaminated with radioactivity from another source.

(3) The drums and other debris appeared to be buried recently. There was little rust and the paint and labels on the drums were in good condition.

(4) There was much debris and drums uncovered in adjacent construction sites.

My recommended course of action is:

(1) Determine what samples were taken by DOE on May 18.

(2) Convince DOE to take additional samples, such as of the ground water and the separate liquid phases in the drummed liquids to determine if the ground water was radiologically contaminated rather than from the buried drums.

(3) DOE should complete the cleanup of the drums.

(4) If the ground water is contaminated, DOE should expand the scope of their RIFS to look for other sites of spent ore.

(5) The airport authority will check to see where the fill came from for the original Midcoast facility construction 2 years ago.

(6) Press the Select Committee of St. Louis Aldermen at their May 26 meeting to quickly come to agreement with DOE to do the RIFS.

(7) DNR will pursue probable RCRA violations in the drum burial.